

Dist. 207 planning to open clinic at Maine East

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By Ames Boykin

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Maine East High School in Park Ridge soon will offer all of its students health care as well as an education.

Maine Township High School District 207 plans to open a clinic at the school, either later this year or early next year, which could also accommodate lower-income students without health insurance.

The district based its decision to open a clinic on a simple idea, Superintendent C. Steven Snider said.

"If a student is not healthy, they're not a good learner," Snider said.

Other area high schools, including Evanston, already have a clinic.

The district is partnering with Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge to turn an old storage space at Maine East into the clinic.

Maine East plans to staff the clinic with a nurse and other Lutheran General professionals to offer basic health care, including inoculations against disease.

People with more serious conditions would be referred to a hospital and would have to get governmental help, like Medicaid, to pay for medical care.

Lack of health coverage for minorities and immigrants is a problem, officials said.

Just last week, U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, a Democrat from Evanston, told doctors at Lutheran General that the large amount of minorities and immigrants, who go without health-care coverage, is becoming a crisis that will get worse with a weak economy.

Planning for the clinic began three years ago, Snider said.

About \$300,000 in both state and local grants have helped clear the way for the opening of the clinic.

But things still have to be worked out before it opens.

Snider said he will meet with Lutheran General representatives this week to discuss what services would be offered at the clinic, and how to staff it.